Eduardo Morales Coll

Puerto Rico : a boiling pot?

[redacted]ño

F
1976
.M62
1990

U18700 7344340

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE

ATENEO PUERTORRIQUEÑO

DATE DUE

NOV 12 1991
JUN 8 1993
JUL 30 1993
MAY 25 1994
MAR 13 1995
AUG 6 1997
DEC 15 1997

HIGHSMITH 45-220

March 9, 1990

F 1976 .M62 1990
Morales Coll, Eduardo.
Address of the president of the Ateneo puertorrique~no

A

EDUARDO MORALES COLL, ESQ.

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTE OF INSULAR AFFAIRS
OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
REGARDING THE PROJECTED
PLEBISCITE
ON THE PUERTO RICAN
POLITICAL STATUS

San Juan, Puerto Rico
March 9, 1990

F 1976 .M62 1990
Morales Coll, Eduardo.
Address of the president of
the Ateneo puertorrique~no

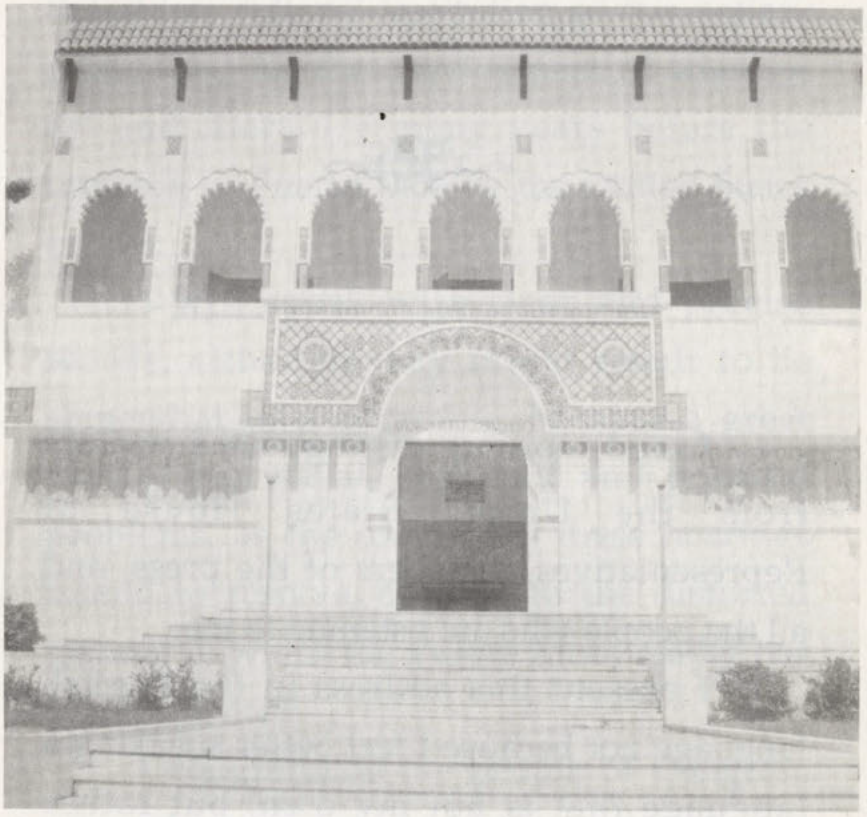
© Eduardo Morales Coll 1990
2nd edition, revised

Ateneo Puertorriqueño
Apartado 1180
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00902
☎: (809) 722-4839
Fax: (809) 721-3877

F 1976 .M62 1990

Morales Coll, Eduardo.

Address of the president of
the Ateneo puertorrique˜no



Ateneo Puertorriqueño
San Juan de Puerto Rico

Good morning distinguished visitors from the United States House of Representatives, members of the press, and all the people who are listening to me.

I present this address in the English language not because I feel better speaking a language that is not my own, but rather because I want to be sure that my message reaches you in the way I intend it to.

I appear before this hearing in compliance to an unanimous mandate of the

Board of Directors of the Ateneo Puertorriqueño (Puerto Rican Athenaeum), the oldest cultural institution of our nation, established for the development of sciences, art and literature many years before the invasion of Puerto Rico by the United States in 1898.

I will speak with clear and precise words, although they might result to be somewhat uncomfortable, because a great part of our social, economic and political problems, as the one which these hearings intend to resolve, are due to the distorted manner in which the Puerto Rican reality has been presented.

I congratulate the people of Congress who have stated their interest in investigating and learning everything possible about Puerto Rico, and even more important, about Puerto Ricans, since that is

the only way in which, in due time, Congress can make an honest and intelligent judgment on what the position of the United States government towards the final political status of Puerto Rico ought to be[1].

I am not presenting myself today before you to talk about the political destiny of my country in the limited terms of economic convenience. There might be less than 936 issues, but I assure you they are no less transcendental than those based on our economy, upon which the destiny of Puerto Rico must also be analyzed. There can be no

[1] This expression of interest resulted to be only apparent. Deponents' time on this hearings was limited to five minutes, and then further reduced, during the hearings, to two minutes. It is impossible to make a serious presentation on any, much less all cultural matters that must be considered in making a decision on the final political destiny of our nation in only two minutes. Furthermore, to pretend a comprehensive statement on all the social, economic and cultural impact that each alternative status encompasses in only one day of public hearings is a showing of desinterest and disrespect to the Puerto Rican people if not also an insult to intelligence. These hearings, thus, only proved to be a sham and a shame.

Marshal plan to rescue a nation from cultural or ethnical destruction.

It is astonishing to see how economists and statisticians pretend to foresee the economic impact upon Puerto Rico under all three political alternatives (Independence, Commonwealth or Statehood) and how politicians accept those forecasts to establish alternative mechanisms for each contingency. I wonder if those same numerical soothsayers were not then available to foresee and thus prevent the mammoth budgetary deficit now encumbering the United States economy, or if then available, why were they unable to foresee and prevent it.

If we are to be honest, let us admit that there is no historical data, no axiom or premise and no rule of thumb upon which the outcome of the Puerto Rican economy under any of the three formulas can be reasonably

foreseen. I also wonder what will happen to the people of Puerto Rico if, after a final decision on our status is made, any of those predictions go wrong.

To the contrary, there is a real adverse impact upon Puerto Rico and upon the United States as well, that can be reasonably foreseen, as to which no consideration has ever been given by any of the United States (Senate or House) committees that have so far entertained a plebiscite to decide Puerto Rico's ultimate political status.[2] We shall discuss this issue later on, when discussing the Second Point of this address.

Regarding the economic issue, I will limit myself to pointing out that during the

[2] For the purposes of this statement, the technicality on whether the procedure shall be a plebiscite or a referendum is considered immaterial.

last 92 years the United States Government has sponsored in Puerto Rico such an absolute economic dependency of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans upon the United States, that it is naive to believe that in this forthcoming plebiscite Puerto Ricans can exercise their right to self determination in a truly free way, with no restriction, apprehension or fear whatsoever, specifically those of an economic nature.

Suffice it to say that more than 90% of all the food consumed in Puerto Rico is imported, and from those more than 80% come from the United States.

The fact that Puerto Rico is the world's fifth largest consumer of United States products shoud not be a surprise to anyone knowing the political cuffs that have kept us in captivity within the United States economy for so long. A customer of this magnitude is

not to be disposed of so easily, not even in obedience to "those laws of Nature as to which the God of Nature holds we are entitled to"[3]

Sensitivity is no virtue by which any government has ever been appraised. Time has come in which it is of interest to the United States to revise this weird Puerto Rican consortium. And it is indeed being revised without any touch of sensitivity, since it appears that "dollar cost" to the United States unreconciled budget will be the prime determining factor.[4]

[3] United States Declaration of Independence.

[4] The United States Senate Finance Committee has adopted a most impudic posture in solving the Puerto Rican issue on status when calling for a "budget neutral" effect. It was the United States who invaded Puerto Rico in 1898, without Puerto Rico's consent, and without any restraint on economic cost to the United States. It has been the United States who has hold – economical and political control over Puerto Rico for the last 92 years. Now, at the brink of allowing Puerto Ricans to express their choice for a final political status, any decision by Puerto Ricans will be considered by Congress as long as it bears no cost to the United States pocket.

The verdict of history is slow, but certain, and history will certainly adjudge that when time came for the United States to exercise its final territorial power over its Puerto Rican colony, in so exercising, and in its weighting of all the available alternatives to dispose of this embarrassing situation, its greater concern was not on the dignity and welfare of Puerto Ricans, but on how much each alternative would cost. The disposition of the Puerto Rican issue as soon as possible and as cheap as possible, is an irresponsible impromptu that history will undoubtedly judge.

The Second Point in my address to you refers to the true "equality" status that we Puerto Ricans hope for, and are entitled to, in the case that our nation is incorporated as a federal state into the United States nation.

The sector that propels statehood for

Puerto Rico has defined "equality" as those conditions equal to those of any other state of the nation. That definition, however, is far from its true meaning when faced with the reality that would exist in the event Puerto Rico was to become a state of the union.

Equality does not mean that under statehood we Puerto Ricans will be able to vote for the President of the United States; nor that we will be able to elect Puerto Rican senators and representatives to Congress, as other states do; nor that Puerto Ricans will receive a slice of the welfare programs under equal conditions as those of the other federal states of the union.

These are only some aspects, and as a matter of fact the only ones, that would give some, but not all, equality rights to Puerto Ricans. It must be understood that Puerto Rico will not be incorporating as a federal

state into your nation as a conglomerate of aborigines (Eskimos, Indians and Aleutians) such as was the case of Alaska, with only 26% of its scarce 128, 643 inhabitants (at the time of annexation) being of aboriginal stock, and the balance being continental United States immigrants. Nor are we a territory inhabited by an immigrant heterogeneous population such as was the case of Hawaii, (Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Samoan and Philippine) with only a 17.5% of its total 493,437 inhabitants (at the time of annexation) being at least part hawaiians.[5] Nor are we a conglomerate of dispersed *poblados* with no sociopolitical cohesion, such as was the case of Texas and New Mexico at the time of their annexation into the United States.

If the people of Congress truly

[5] At the time of annexation as the 50th state of the union, only 1.6% of Hawaii's total population was pure Hawaiian.

investigate and study about Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans, they will realize that Puerto Rico is a nation (irrespective of the political meaning that this word also has). Although lacking full sovereignty, Puerto Rico is a nation inhabited by Puerto Ricans; of Hispanic descent with a distinct history and culture; with a common native language: Spanish; with a particular way of being; with its own mentality and folklore; with its own customs and traditions; and with its own artistic, musical and literary expression, all in existence and flourishing long before the United States invasion to our nation in 1898.

All things considered, then, what is the true equality that we Puerto Ricans will demand in the case that our Spanish-American nation is incorporated as a state into your Anglo-American nation? Participation in political processes or in the

distribution of financial aid are not the only elements to consider to determine if under statehood we would be able to achieve true equality together with other states of the union.

Integration of Puerto Ricans into the United States community; full participation of Puerto Ricans in all social processes; recognition of Puerto Rican cultural values; incorporation of Puerto Rican history into the history of the United States; use of the Spanish language under equal conditions with English at all federal levels; and acceptance of the ethnic identity of each Puerto Rican are the most important factors that must be considered in defining "equality" under statehood.

Equality is not that we will equally speak English at Congress and all federal agencies as a resident from any other

anglophone state would. Equality means that we Puerto Ricans must also be granted the right to use our (Spanish) language at endeavours before congress and all federal agencies, just as residents from other states are granted the right to use their (English) language.

As of now I can guarantee that in the event that Puerto Rico is incorporated as a federal state of the union , or even before, we will organize in Puerto Rico, and in the entire nation of the United States, the **Spanish Also** movement, so that we Puerto Ricans, together with the more than 20 million hispanic speakers that currently live in the United States, can share (as Canadian Anglo speakers share with Canadian French speakers) true equality in linguistic rights in all branches, departments and agencies of the federal government.

I dare to predict that Puerto Rican nationals will never enter into the genocide of the "melting pot" of the United States. If at all, Puerto Rico will become a "boiling pot" within the federation of the United States in an eventual natural defensive reaction that we, Puerto Ricans will generate, to defend and preserve our identity, language and culture.[6]

It is curious to note that the only thing that the representatives of the three political parties in Puerto Rico are in agreement on, is that they all have insisted in being Puerto Ricans first, no matter what the ultimate political status for Puerto Rico could

[6] This defensive reaction will be a movement of all Puerto Ricans, including those who voted in favor of annexation, when they realize the second class citizenship that Puerto Ricans are destined to suffer under statehood if true and complete equality is not achieved.

eventually be.[7] It is now worth asking: Is the entrance of the Puerto Rican nation into the union of the United States wise when there are no historical, linguistic or cultural nexus that join one to the other? -Is this entrance possible in the terms of the true equality that we have hereinabove defined? By chance, have the Puerto Rican residents of New York, Chicago, New Haven, Newark or Philadelphia really integrated into North American society?[8]

What will the real effect of statehood and the strength of our relations be when we know from the outset that our "real entry into the United States economy and society is

[7] Even the President of the pro-statehood party, while deposing before the House subcommittee on insular and international affairs on March 2,1990, stated that he considered himself to be a Puerto Rican first.

[8] In the magazine Centro, of Hunter College in New York (Vol. II, No. 2), a study made on this integration issue concludes:

"As the second generation of the Puerto Rican community approached maturity, it found that the door to real entry into the United States economy and society had been blocked."

already blocked," and that "we are Puerto Ricans first" and everything else, including U.S. citizenship and issues of national interest are secondary?

The United States should make it very clear to Puerto Ricans what is the equality that they are willing to guarantee Puerto Ricans under statehood, specially in matters such as linguistic rights.[9] Puerto Ricans should make it very clear to the United States that, supposing statehood is chosen as our

[9] Senator J. Bennett Johnston's advice to statehooders in Puerto Rico to stay silent on the question of language because it emphasizes separateness (that we are different and that we are hispanic) is totally unacceptable. Any relationship that Puerto Rico might have with the United States must be entered with full knowledge on both parts on what the other party is and with full recognition and respect towards each others' ethnical, cultural, historical and linguistic values. We, Puerto Ricans are proud of, and must show our pride on each of our national values. If the United States are going to accept us as part of the federal union as a state, they must accept us with full knowledge of what we are, and exactly as we are; as very well put by Mr. Johnston: "different and hispanic". (See Hearings before the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources on June 2, 1989, U.S. gov. Printing Office, Part 1, pages 370-371).

final political destiny, we would always enter into the nation as Puerto Ricans first, which logically means that in the case of a conflict of interest, we would defend the interests of Puerto Rico first over the interests of the nation, since that is the only true and honest way of being Puerto Ricans first.

The Third Point I must bring to your consideration is the issue of who can exercise voting rights in this coming Puerto Rican plebiscite.[10] It will be necessary to amend the Federal Relations Act of March 1, 1917 (64 Stat. 319) if an abuse of national, natural and moral rights and of sound reason is to be

[10] It has been established that there is no explicit constitutional protection of the right to vote. The fifteenth amendment only protects from discrimination on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude. To the contrary, the United States Supreme Court has held valid a restriction to participate in an election "when there is a showing of overriding govermental necessity". The Court has also stated that there could be a justified discrimination in determining who can exercise voting rights when the exclusion is necessary "to promote a compelling state interest" and when the voting exercise is granted only to those "primarily interested" or "primarily affected".

avoided in this upcoming voting exercise.[11]

Local Puerto Rican laws grant "Puerto Rican citizens" the right to vote in elections. The Federal Relations Act states that Puerto Rican citizens are all the citizens of the United States that have resided in Puerto Rico for at least one year. Those, of course, include United States continentals from Montana, Utah, Oregon and elsewhere, as well as United States nationalized foreigners from the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Colombia, etc. that have resided in Puerto Rico during the last year.

With all due respect to all American

[11] This forthcoming plebiscite is not to be taken as an ordinary voting exercise for the election of public officers where the historical link between taxation and representation could be claimed. Payment of taxes is not a guarantee to participation in any suffrage. Aliens in the United States pay taxes yet are not granted voting rights. For aliens, payment of taxes is only their contribution to government expenses in public services for the general welfare. Aliens in Puerto Rico are those that are not Puerto Rican nationals and as such should not be entitled to voting rights in this status plebiscite.

citizens residing in Puerto Rico which are continental born or nationalized foreigners, I do not think that to be an American citizen, but rather a Puerto Rican natural, is what should be controlling in deciding who is going to vote in this forthcoming status plebiscite.

In Puerto Rico there is a large number of continental United States citizens in transit that will eventually return to the United States upon termination of their federal or private employment. There are also many Dominicans, Cubans and other foreigners that have adopted United States citizenship, who are residing in Puerto Rico only because of climate or linguistic conveniences but are willing to emigrate to the United States or return to their country of origin should their particular circumstances permit.[12] Their

[12] A study made by Dr. Himilce Esteve, a cuban exile and a professor at the University of Puerto Rico shows that should the Castro regime be deposed, almost 70% of all Cubans in Puerto Rico would return to Cuba.

intention, in most of the cases, has never been to become permanent Puerto Rican residents nor Puerto Rican citizens.

Besides, all those nationalized immigrants that are now United States citizens have pledged allegiance to the United States, not to Puerto Rico.

Again, I do not think that what the forthcoming plebiscite seeks is for Congress to abide to the will of the United States citizens living in Puerto Rico, but to the will of the Puerto Rican nationals as to their ultimate political destiny. What participation in a Puerto Rican plebiscite should be granted to those people that are foreigners, most of them in transit, that have never pledged allegiance to Puerto Rico but, to the contrary, have compromised themselves only to the United States citizenship? Wouldn't it be fair to say that should Puerto Rico become a

republic, almost all of those foreigners will move to somewhere else in the continental United States because their real intention was not to become Puerto Ricans, but rather U.S. citizens?

I can understand all the love those foreigners might have towards Puerto Rico, but I do not think that those sentiments, nor United States citizenship, are to be considered in deciding who is entitled to vote in such a paramount suffrage. Puerto Rican naturals-- those born in Puerto Rico or somewhere else, but at least one of whose parents is a Puerto Rican, should be the only ones entitled to vote in deciding the destiny of their country. The rule to apply should be the same one established by the United States at the Treatise of Paris of 1898 to differentiate Puerto Ricans from Spaniards residing in Puerto Rico. Treatises, as well as the

constitution, are the "Supreme law of the Land". There being no specific disposition in the Constitution to establish a reasonable rule as to voting rights in a plebiscite of this nature, it is a sane discretion to recourse to the Treatise of Paris and maintain the same principles of distinction that were then established. What was just and reasonable then, could very well be just and reasonable now.

I am sure that any decision made on Puerto Rico´s final political status with the participation of foreigners will be unacceptable and unenforceable.[13]

A violation to Puerto Rican nationality will be commited if the right to vote is granted to any person only for being a United

[13] Hamilton, Williamson, Sherman and Madison expressed similiar concern towards voting participation by foreigners while framing of the United States Constitution. Delegate Mason, from Virginia, made a specific warning on the neccessity to avoid the participation of foreigners in the approval of laws and in handling goverment matters.

States citizen residing in Puerto Rico. Should the right to vote be granted to any United States citizen residing in Puerto Rico, the real intention of Puerto Ricans regarding their political destiny will never be known.[14]

Should the right to vote be granted to any person only for being a United States citizen residing in Puerto Rico, a great and irreparable injustice will be committed, since the final decision on the Puerto Rican political status would not have been made by Puerto Ricans, who are the only ones with a moral and natural right to decide the destiny of their own nation.

I think we all should agree that what we are looking forward to knowing is not the will of the United States citizens residing in

[14] Approximately 10% of the Puerto Rican population are foreigners (continental or nationalized United States citizens). Due to the close results of the last two elections (less tha 10% per cent) it could happen that foreigners' vote be decisive in determining the ultimate political destiny of Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico, but rather the will of us, Puerto Ricans, as to the final political status of our nation.

Thank you very much.

Eduardo Morales Coll
President
Ateneo Puertorriqueño

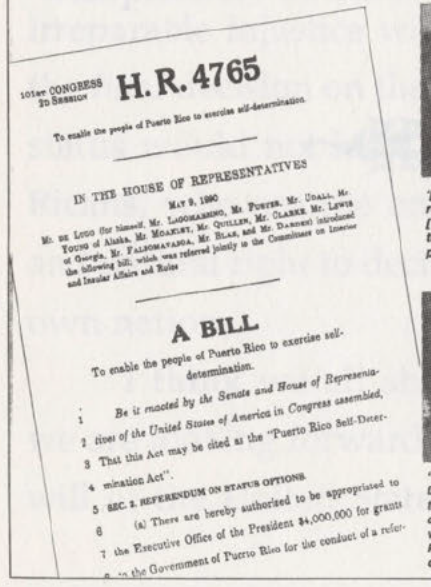
INSIDE
P.R. gasoline prices remain stable Page 3
Archives preservation effort gets 30Gs Page 3

WORLD
Iraq seizes foreign assets
Page 6

The San Juan Star PLUS
SCRIPPS HOWARD

Virgin Islands 65¢ Thursday, September 20, 1990 Daily 30¢

Plebiscite bill OK'd



101st CONGRESS
2D SESSION **H. R. 4765**

To enable the people of Puerto Rico to exercise self-determination.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 9, 1990

Mr. DE LUGO (for himself, Mr. LAGOMARSINO, Mr. PUNTER, Mr. UDALL, Mr. YOUNG of Alaska, Mr. MCKINNEY, Mr. QUILLEN, Mr. CLARKE, Mr. LEWIS of Georgia, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, Mr. BLAZ, and Mr. DARDEN) introduced the following bill; which was referred jointly to the Committees on Interior and Insular Affairs and Rules

A BILL

To enable the people of Puerto Rico to exercise self-determination.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

That this Act may be cited as the "Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act".

SEC. 2. REFERENDUM ON STATUS OPTIONS.

(a) There are hereby authorized to be appropriated to the Executive Office of the President $4,000,000 for grants to the Government of Puerto Rico for the conduct of a refer-

'[The bill] simply recognizes what [legislative] authority exists at the present time.'
Del. Ron de Lugo

'We don't need the Dialogue Committee or Congress to do that [grant the vote to offshore Puerto Ricans]'
Gov. Hernández Colón

House panel sets Sept. 16 as vote date

By HARRY TURNER
Scripps Howard News Service

WASHINGTON — In an historic action, the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee approved legislation Wednesday that would allow voters to decide Puerto Rico's political destiny in a 1991 plebiscite.

The legislation, passed by a 37-1 margin, sets next Sept. 16 for the island plebiscite in which voters would respond to this ballot question:

"Which political status do you favor for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico on terms to be consented to by the people of Puerto Rico and the Congress of the United States?

"Independence . . . statehood . . . a new commonwealth relationship, or . . . none of the above statuses."

However, the committee action provoked a new dispute over the issue of whether mainland Puerto Ricans should vote in the plebiscite, and the controversy increasingly appears headed for resolution in the courts.

The bill gives authority to devise a mainland vote plan to the Dialogue Committee, made up of one member each from the Popular Democratic, New Progressive and Puerto Rican Independence parties.

The bill requires that two members of the Dialogue Committee must agree before any plan can be submitted to the Legislature for implementation.

Since both the NPP and PIP are strongly against the mainland vote, the provision was viewed as a check to keep the PDP-dominated Legislature from going ahead on its own with the mainland vote.

Nevertheless, Gov. Hernández Colón claimed after the committee action Wednesday that the

See PLEBISCITE, Page 20